

instance, for stops with limited visibility due to a curve, knoll, or other obstruction, stops located on high speed roads, when weather or light conditions reduce visibility, or when you suspect an approaching motorist is paying less than full attention to driving, turn them on earlier to make sure motorists see you in time. On the other hand, activating pre-warning flashers *too* early can be confusing to motorists – they're not sure when or even if you're going to stop, and may be tempted to pass your bus. Every bus stop is different. Use your "safety judgment" to decide what's the best pre-warning distance at each stop. If you have questions about how early to activate pre-warning flashers at a particular stop, ask your supervisor for advice.

- As the stop first comes into view, start scanning the surrounding area. Are the children who should be waiting for your bus in sight? They should be trained to line up in single file well back from the roadway – at least 15' is safest. But near a bus stop, anything can happen. Scan for children playing at or near the stop, or hurrying towards it out of a house.
- Be alert for parked and idling vehicles in the vicinity that may suddenly begin to move. Check for any unusual potential hazards near the stop such as snow banks, construction equipment, delivery trucks, or emergency vehicles.
- Slow down well before you get to the stop. Going slow gives you time to respond to an unexpected hazard. You should be down to "dead idle speed," with your foot "covering" the service brake, at least two bus lengths before the stop. Last-second braking with children nearby could result in a tragedy.

- As you bring your bus to a stop, check again for other vehicles. Are all stopped, or slowing to a stop?

Slow down well before you get to the stop. Going slow gives you time to respond to an unexpected hazard.

- Do not pull your bus next to waiting students. Stop far enough back so they have to walk to the bus. Stop so they can still see your face and you can see them clearly. Pulling up next to waiting students is dangerous. A child could suddenly move or be pushed toward your bus. In slippery conditions, your bus could slide into the children at the stop.

At the stop in the morning:

- As soon as your bus comes to a full stop, secure it with the parking or emergency brake. (On buses equipped with interlock systems, opening the door engages the brake.) Securing your bus every time children are getting on or off prevents it from lunging forward suddenly if your foot slips off the service brake pedal, or you're suddenly distracted or become ill, or if your bus is struck from behind by another vehicle.
- Promptly open the passenger door to activate your red student flashers and stop arms and let motorists know they have to stop. Never open the door even part way until your bus has come to a complete stop and is fully secured. On all buses with manually-operated passenger doors, and some buses with power doors, you can

- open the door just enough to activate the flashers. This helps keep your bus warm in cold weather.
 - Just to be safe, quickly check to be absolutely certain your red flashers are on. Some buses have an indicator light on or near the control panel to let you know if they're working. You should also be able to see one or both stop arms in your driver's side mirror.
 - As an additional warning to motorists coming up behind your bus while you're at the stop, keep the service brake pedal lightly depressed so your brake lights stay on.
 - Raise one hand in the "universal wait signal." Hold it almost against the windshield and angle it towards the students outside so it's easier to see. If students are across the street, use your left hand. If students are waiting on the passenger door side of the street, use your right hand.
 - Be prepared to use the "universal danger signal" by placing your other hand on the horn. Honk only if you spot a vehicle about to pass your bus and want to alert children to go back to the side of the road they started from. The danger signal has saved children's lives, but it only works if students know ahead of time what it means.
 - If all vehicles in the vicinity are stopped and everything seems safe, give the waiting students the "universal safe to board signal." Use your left hand if students are across the street and right hand if students are on your passenger side.
 - If the passenger door was only partly opened to this point, open it all the way.
 - A group of students should be taught to approach the bus together, as one unit. Letting them straggle across one at a time increases the chance a motorist will grow impatient and drive around your bus. Remind children about this every day.
 - As they enter, remind children to use the handrail to avoid slipping on the steps.
 - Briefly greet students as they board but keep your primary attention focused outside the bus for as long as you're at the stop.
 - Wait until all children are seated before leaving the stop. To protect your stopped bus, leave your red flashers on until you are ready to pull away.
- Leaving a stop in the morning:*
- When you believe all children who were at the stop have boarded your bus, make a very careful scan of the surrounding area. Does everything appear normal? If parents who accompanied their children to the stop are still present, train yourself to look at them before leaving. If there's a waiting vehicle facing your bus, look at the driver. Before you pull away, make sure no one's trying to get your attention to warn you that a child is near your bus. Children's lives have been saved this way.
 - Resume full pressure on the service brake pedal, make sure the transmission is in drive, and release parking brake.
 - Close the passenger door. (If your bus is equipped with an interlock system, closing the door releases the brake.)

- Give your passengers time to be seated.
- Carefully check your driving and pedestrian crossover mirrors before resuming forward motion. Do not check your internal overhead mirror at this point. Always check crossover mirrors last.

Be especially alert for children running after your bus just as it pulls away.

- Leave the stop slowly. "Dead idle speed" is fast enough until you're safely away from the stop – at least two bus lengths. Continue scanning the surrounding area as you slowly pick up speed. Be especially alert for children running after your bus just as it pulls away. A child who's afraid of getting in trouble for missing the bus may do anything to catch it.
- When you're well away from the stop and back up to normal road speed for the area, and if the roadway several seconds ahead of your bus appears free of potentially hazardous situations, you can glance into
- your internal overhead mirror to make sure all passengers are safely seated. Keep it brief. Taking your eyes off the road is always dangerous.
- **3.2.2 Dropping off students.** Statistically, dropping off children is twice as dangerous as picking them up. You must be extremely cautious on a take-home run. When approaching a bus stop to drop off students, follow these safety procedures.

Approaching a stop in the afternoon:

- Well before you get there, remind children who are getting off at the next

stop to get ready. Books and homework or other possessions should be stowed in backpacks; coats and gloves and hats should be on; etc. Get to know your students – some need more time than others to get ready.

- Children must stay in their seats until your bus is fully stopped. Even though it may save a few seconds at the stop, do not let children move to a front row while the bus is moving. It's dangerous.
- Be aware of vehicles behind your bus as you approach a stop. Are they closing quickly, tailgating, trying to pass, or driving erratically? If you can pull over in a safe location well before the stop to let motorists go around you, do so. Courtesy to other motorists improves bus stop safety. Make sure the shoulder is adequate for your bus. Use your right turn signal to indicate you're pulling off the road, then activate your 4-way flashers while you're stopped. (Check to be sure your amber pre-warning flashers are not on.) Pull fully off the road and come to a complete stop – it's dangerous to "troll" along the
- shoulder. When vehicles have passed, use your left turn signal before pulling back onto the roadway.
- Before you get to the stop, double-check the master flasher switch to make sure it's "armed." (Learn how to find it without looking for it.)

Courtesy to other motorists improves bus stop safety.

- Activate amber pre-warning flashers

early enough that other motorists have enough time to slow down and stop. A general rule of thumb is about 300' before the stop. Turn them on earlier for stops with limited visibility, stops on high speed roads, when weather or light conditions reduce visibility, or when you suspect an approaching motorist is not paying attention.

- As the next stop comes into view, start scanning the surrounding area. Be alert for any unusual or potentially hazardous situations near the stop. If you see a fixed potential hazard (snow bank, construction debris, etc.) right where children were going to disembark, you may have to stop a short distance (a bus length or less) before or past the normal drop-off point. If you do have to move a stop even slightly, inform children before they depart so they aren't disoriented once they're off the bus.
- Be especially careful with younger children who are more easily confused.
- You should also be on the lookout for non-fixed hazards such as roaming dogs or suspicious individuals loitering near a stop.
- If you have any doubt about whether it's safe to drop off a child, keep the child on board. An unexpected change like this can make children very anxious – reassure them that everything will be fine. Do not just continue on your run. If possible, pull off the road near the stop. Immediately contact base by radio, briefly explain your concerns, and wait for their guidance. The transportation office may be able to contact parents to meet their children. In some cases you may be directed to keep the children on board until an

alternate drop-off point can be worked out.

- Even if everything looks completely normal as you approach the stop, slow down well before you get there. Approach bus stops at "dead idle speed" with your foot covering the service brake – "just in case." Anything can happen near a bus stop. A younger sibling excited to meet a big brother or sister could come rushing toward your bus just as you pull up to the stop. A bus stop is no place for being in a hurry or for jackrabbit stops or starts.

If you have any doubt about whether it's safe to drop off a child, keep the child on board.

At a stop in the afternoon:

- As soon as your bus comes to a full stop, secure it with the parking or emergency brake. (On buses equipped with interlock systems, opening the door engages the brake.) Leaving a bus in gear, held back only by your foot on the service brake pedal, poses an unnecessary risk to children around it.
- Many motor vehicle accidents occur each year, especially in wet weather, because of the driver's foot slipping off the brake pedal.
- Securing the bus at every bus stop also protects children if the driver suddenly becomes ill or if another vehicle crashes into the back of the bus. Scary as they are, both scenarios happen every year in New York State.
- As soon as your bus is secured, open

the passenger door to activate your red student flashers and stop arms. (Never open the door until your bus is completely stopped and secured.)

- Just to be safe, check quickly to be absolutely certain your red flashers are on. Some buses have an indicator light on the control panel to let you know if they're working. You should also be able to see one or both stop arms in your driver's side mirror.
- As an additional warning to motorists behind you at the stop, keep the service brake pedal lightly depressed so your brake lights stay on.
- Do not let children exit your bus wearing headphones, oversized hats, or while talking or texting on their cell phones – they need to be able to see and hear and pay attention while getting off the bus.
- Be alert for children carrying loose items such as school papers as they disembark. A child dropping something near or under the bus is a common cause of by-own-bus tragedies. Children should stash all belongings in their backpacks before exiting – remind them ahead of time about this, and insist that they actually do it. Some bus drivers carry a few plastic grocery bags on the bus to give to children who have loose items that won't fit in a backpack.
- Be alert for children wearing clothing or backpacks with dangling drawstrings or straps. They could become snagged in the handrail, passenger door, or even the fire extinguisher as the child goes down the steps and exits the bus.
- Inform your supervisor or SBDI if you see a child with long drawstrings, straps, or other dangerous clothing. A phone

call to a parent might prevent a tragedy.

- By state law you **must** instruct every crossing child in safe crossing procedures every day. Ignoring this law places the children and you at risk. Give some form of bus stop safety reminder to each child before disembarking. Keep it brief, simple, and positive: "Check before you step off the bus", "Go far enough in front of the bus to see my face", "Wait for my signal before starting across the road", and "Stay alert for cars – they don't always stop for our bus" are all acceptable. Don't just mechanically repeat the same phrase every day. Be a real teacher – find your own style for getting through to kids.

Give some form of bus stop safety reminder to each child each day – keep it brief, simple, and positive.

- At group stops, it is safer to discharge crossers before non-crossers. It takes work to pull this procedure off – children don't naturally separate themselves into crossers and non-crossers – but it can help you establish greater order outside the bus, making it easier to keep tabs on children who have disembarked. "Crossers first" is especially useful at large group stops, such as trailer parks or apartment complexes, which can be very confusing.
- Remind children to use the handrail as they go down the steps. Many children slip and fall on bus steps.
- Make a mental count of the number of

children who get off your bus at each stop. Do this even when you're on the same run day after day and you think you know how many children get off at a stop. Children often bring friends home from school.

You will use your count to double-check that all children are safely away from your bus before moving it.

- Teach children to pause briefly at the bottom step before disembarking and to "check before they step" off your bus.
- They should look both ways. Children just stepping off a bus have been killed when a vehicle illegally passed on the passenger side. Insist that all students check before they step off the bus – even high school students. They're at risk too.

Even high school students are at risk – insist that all children "check before they step" off your bus.

- If children don't have to cross, they should walk quickly off the roadway and directly away from the bus. Do not let them check the mailbox or tarry near the edge of the road. By state law, you must leave the red student flashers on and cannot move your bus until all children who have disembarked are off the road and at least 15' away from the bus.
- Be alert when parents, grandparents, siblings, or friends meet children at the stop. Responsible adults can be a great help at bus stops. In the morning, children waiting for the bus are much less likely to fool around when parents or other adults are present. But in the afternoon, a child excited to see a loved

one might be distracted and rush out into the road. Encourage parents to meet young children at the bus door. If they must cross the road, parent and child should practice standard safe crossing procedures together. Courteously explain to the parent the importance of teaching this procedure to the child. Without an explanation, parents simply might not understand why it's important to follow safe school bus crossing procedures.

- Always look for ways to work cooperatively with parents to protect children at bus stops.
- If children have to cross, they should walk far enough in front of the bus to clearly see the bus driver's face and to wait there (use the upright palm "universal wait signal" to hold them in place) until the driver gives the "universal crossing signal" to proceed across the road. Avoid training children to wait for your signal "ten feet in front of the bus." Few children know exactly how far that is. Avoid teaching them to wait to cross at a set location (for instance, next to a tree or sign along the road). A substitute driver may not stop the bus in exactly the same location as you, and children could be confused. "I see the driver, the driver sees me" is the simplest and most effective way to teach children how far in front of the bus they should wait.
- At group stops, children should be taught to wait for your signal as a unit and to cross together. Straggling across the road one at a time increases the risk that a waiting motorist will lose patience and drive past the bus, striking a child.
- Crossing as a single unit also makes it a little easier to keep tabs on children.

While children are crossing, honk the horn only if you want them to immediately head back to the side of the road they started from.

While children are waiting to cross the road, or in the act of crossing, keep your hand over the horn in case you need to quickly alert children that a vehicle is approaching. New York State's "universal danger signal" has saved children's lives. Our signal means one thing and one thing only: while children are crossing, honk the horn only if you want them to immediately head back to the side of the road they started from. In a real incident, there's no time to remind children of what it means. Every situation is different. Depending on where the approaching vehicle is when you first spot it, it may be safer to let children continue across. The best way to be prepared for such a quick and profound judgment call is to remain highly aware of the surrounding roadway environment every time you are stopped to pick up or drop off children. If your mind wanders away from your crossing children, you may not be ready to make the best decision quickly when you realize a vehicle is speeding toward the children.

If you drive a school bus for twenty years, you may never have to make such an instantaneous life-and-death decision. Or it could happen the first day you drive bus.

- Buses equipped with public address systems and external speakers give the driver another tool for influencing children's behavior outside the bus. Most PA systems are too cumbersome to rely on to communicate with children in a sudden emergency, such as a vehicle about to pass your bus. The horn is the quickest, surest way to instantly communicate with children in an emergency. But external PAs can be helpful in teaching children how to cross properly. They are especially useful in helping children gather into one crossing unit at group stops.
- Keep your attention focused on the danger zones around your bus the entire time you're at the stop. Stay off the two-way radio while children are in the process of getting off your bus. Do your best to tune out children's behaviors inside, too. Keep your eyes off the internal overhead mirror at this point. At a bus stop, the internal overhead mirror is the most dangerous piece of equipment on your bus.

Leaving a stop in the afternoon:

- Before leaving the stop, locate and methodically re-count students who have just disembarked now that they're outside your bus. If you counted four children going down the steps, make sure you can account for all four before moving your bus.
- If you've lost track of a child who just disembarked, don't move the bus until you can figure out where he or she is. There are several ways to accomplish this. A parent at the bus stop or a reliable student may be able to tell you where the child went. If you're lucky enough to have a bus attendant with you, he or she can check around and

under the bus. There are even occasions when your office can make a quick phone call to make sure the missing child is inside the house. But in a worst case scenario, when all else fails, you have no choice but to shut off and secure your bus, take the key with you, and peek under the bus.

- State law allows you to get off the bus with children on board in an emergency, and this is an emergency. Explain what you're doing to children still on board and ask them to help out by behaving.
- When you are confident all children who have just disembarked are safely out of the road and away from your bus, make a final visual scan of the surrounding area. Does everything appear normal? If parents who met their children to the stop are still present, train yourself to look at them before pulling away. If there's a waiting vehicle facing your bus, look at its driver. Listen for warnings, too – shouts from bystanders or honking from nearby vehicles. ("Crack" your driver window so it's partially open, and keep the radio volume low at stops, to help you hear last-second warnings.) Before resuming forward motion, make sure no one's trying to get your attention to warn you that a child is near your bus. Children's lives have been saved by last-second warnings from people near the bus.
- Resume full pressure on the service brake pedal, make sure the transmission is in drive, and release the parking brake.
- Close the passenger door. (If your bus is equipped with an interlock system, closing the door releases the brake.)
- Carefully check your driving and

pedestrian crossover mirrors before resuming forward motion. Do *not* check your internal overhead mirror at this point. Always check crossover mirrors last.

Always leave bus stops slowly – be prepared for the unexpected.

- As in the morning, this is the moment of truth. Leave the stop slowly – do not let yourself be in a hurry. "Dead idle speed" is fast enough until you're at least two bus lengths away from the stop. Continue scanning the surrounding area as you slowly pick up speed.
- When you're well away from the stop and back up to normal road speed for the area, and if the roadway several seconds ahead of your bus appears free of potentially hazardous situations, you can glance into your internal overhead mirror to make sure your remaining passengers are still in their seats and behaving appropriately. Keep it very brief. Taking your eyes off the road is always dangerous.

3.2.3 School loading areas. The physical layout of school loading areas and bus loops varies greatly. Many are less than ideal in terms of traffic flow. Few school campuses were designed with school bus safety in mind. Many lack the space to keep buses entirely separate from other vehicles (teachers, parents, student drivers, delivery vehicles, etc.) or from students who walk to school. In communities where space is at a premium, buses may be forced to park right on the street when dropping off or picking up students at school.

Regardless of the physical layout of the bus

loading area, caution is always required. On school grounds, children may be present anywhere at any time. Typical dangers in school loading areas include:

- Children walking between buses lined up in the loop.
- Children running or playing near buses.
- Children standing too close to buses as they pull into or out of school.
- Other motorists (parents, student drivers, teachers, etc.) illegally passing buses as students board or exit.
- Poles and signs may be located too close to the road. A child sticking his or her hand out the window as your bus pulls out of school could be seriously injured. It's happened in our state.

To avoid an accident on school grounds, follow these safety procedures:

- Always secure your bus with the spring brake or parking brake when dropping off or picking up students on school grounds.
- Do not leave your bus when children are inside.
- Check your bus for sleeping or hiding children before leaving the school after dropping off in the morning.
- If, after all children have disembarked, you park your bus on school grounds, always take the key with you and secure it fully by pumping the air brakes down.
- Avoid unnecessary idling on school grounds – it's harmful to everyone's health and wastes money. Shut your bus off while waiting for students to be released from school.
- Avoid backing up on school grounds. A child could be behind your bus. If you must back up on school grounds in an emergency, use an adult spotter (another

bus driver, a teacher, the principal, etc.) to assist you.

- Drive slowly on school grounds at all times.
- Always activate red student flashers when loading or unloading passengers on school grounds or when behind another bus that has its flashers on.
- Do not pass another bus with its red student flashers on.

Because school loading areas vary so much, you need to learn the specific features of the schools you will be driving for. With a trainer or experienced driver, take a tour of your local school bus loading areas. Go over the traffic pattern at each school and discuss any unusual hazards.

3.3 Crossover Mirrors

3.3.1 Proper adjustment of crossover mirrors. School buses are equipped with three different types of mirror systems:

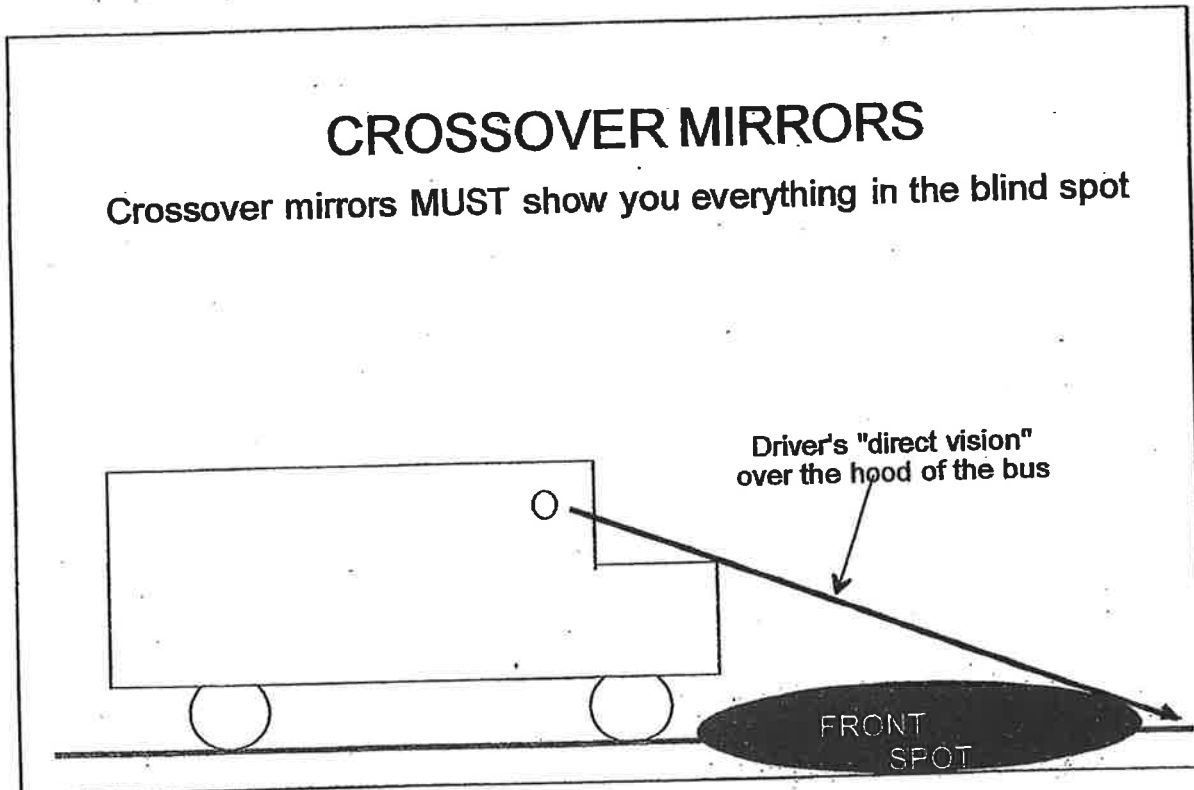
1. Driving mirrors – usually mounted just ahead of the driver's seating position on both sides of the bus. They may consist of a single flat mirror or a flat mirror/convex mirror combination. Some are power adjustable. Their primary purpose is to show you the vehicles behind and around your bus as you move down the road. They are also essential when backing.
2. Internal overhead mirror – mounted on the bulkhead above the driver. Its purpose is to let the driver check on passengers when it's safe to do so.
3. Pedestrian crossover mirrors – usually mounted on both front corners of the bus. There are many styles of crossover mirrors.

To provide a wider angle of vision all are convex to some degree.

Proper adjustment of crossover mirrors is extremely important. If a mirror is out of adjustment, you could run over a child. It is against the law to drive a school bus with the

If a crossover mirror is out of adjustment, you could run over a child.

All school buses have blind spots. They vary in size depending on the type of bus you're



crossover mirrors out of adjustment.

The primary purpose of crossover mirrors is to help you check for children at bus stops. It's easy to lose track of a child hidden from direct view in the blind spots – often called "danger zones" – around your bus. Most school bus fatalities are the result of "by-own-bus" incidents in which the driver failed to see a child. Crossover mirrors can help prevent such tragedies.

driving, your height, and how your seat is adjusted. "Conventional" style school buses (engine in front) usually have bigger blind spots than "transit" style buses (rear engine or engine next to the driver). Depending on the height of the driver and how the driver's seat is adjusted, a conventional bus may have to contend with a front blind spot of up to twenty-five feet. The same driver in a transit style bus may have a blind spot of only ten feet. However, children have been run over and killed by transit style buses just as they have by conventional style buses. Proper mirror adjustment is critical to bus stop safety

no matter what type of school bus you're driving.

By state law, mirrors must show the seated driver any areas in front of the bus, or to the sides of the bus, hidden from direct view. Crossover mirrors must show you the entire area in front of your bus from the bumper to where you can see the pavement directly over the hood.

A "one size fits all" mirror adjustment will not be right for all drivers. Crossover mirrors may need to be individually adjusted depending on the seat adjustment and the height of the driver. Proper adjustment is especially important for shorter drivers, who sit lower in the seat and usually have more of their direct vision blocked by the bus hood.

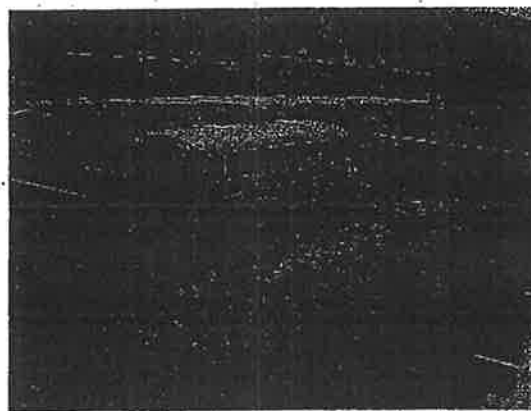
Some crossover mirrors cannot be adjusted without a mechanic's help. Ask your supervisor or SBDI for assistance if you're not sure if your mirrors are adjusted correctly for you.

3.3.2 Correct use of crossover mirrors.

Even properly adjusted crossover mirrors mean little if they are not used carefully at every bus stop.

Check your crossover mirrors last, immediately before resuming forward motion, at every bus stop – morning or afternoon – along the route or on school grounds. Do not check on passengers with the internal overhead mirror just before moving away from a stop. Do not check your driving mirrors just before re-entering the traffic flow. As you prepare to leave a stop, nothing is more important than making sure no children are near your bus.

Some bus drivers mistakenly think crossover mirrors exist only to look for a child they know they've lost track of. But the most



important purpose of crossover mirrors is to help you spot a child you didn't know you'd lost track of. Children are so inherently unpredictable that the only real protection against a by-own-bus incident is to train yourself to systematically check your crossover mirrors just before moving the bus – at every single bus stop, even when you're "100% certain" all children are safely away from your bus. Nothing you will do as a school bus driver requires greater vigilance. It is impossible to be too careful at this moment of truth.

The most important purpose of crossover mirrors is to help you spot a child you didn't know you'd lost track of.

By itself, neither crossover mirror can show all areas to the front and sides of your bus hidden from your direct vision. Crossover mirrors are designed to be used in tandem. Check your mirrors carefully and methodically, one at a time. A quick glance may not reveal a child. Search each mirror for at least two to three seconds – longer in low-light conditions. Move actively in the driver's seat, and move

your head, to change your angle of vision and maximize what you can see in each mirror. Train yourself to follow this procedure meticulously at every single bus stop. It is one of the surest signs of a truly professional school bus driver.

3.4 Route Safety

3.4.1 Placement of bus stops. School districts are responsible for establishing reasonably safe bus stops. Safety and efficiency must both be considered.

Determining the exact location of bus stops is one of your supervisor's most important responsibilities. Every stretch of road, every neighborhood, and every driving environment presents its own set of hazards to account for when deciding where to place a bus stop.

Deciding where to locate a child's stop is not a bus driver's job, but drivers should be aware of the general guidelines school districts utilize for establishing stops. You are the eyes and ears of the school district while driving your bus. If you feel a particular bus stop is unusually hazardous, or have an idea for improving safety on your route, let your supervisor know. Suggestions from bus drivers can help supervisors create safer bus stops.

Factors typically considered by supervisors when deciding where to place a bus stop include:

- *Visibility.* The greater the visibility, the greater the chance other motorists will see your stopped bus. Stops with limited visibility, such as those located near a sharp curve or the crest of a hill are more hazardous.
- *Intersections.* Picking up or dropping off students at an intersection should

be avoided whenever possible. Stopping about 100' (three bus lengths) before the corner gives other motorists more time to see your stopped bus.

- *Waiting area.* Children need adequate room well back from the roadway to wait for their bus.
- *Crossovers.* Motorists don't always stop for stopped school buses. Few if any school districts can eliminate crossovers altogether, but finding ways to reduce the number of crossovers is one way to improve bus stop safety. Crossing students on high speed roads, multilane roadways, or in areas of heavy traffic, should be avoided when possible. Crossing young children (Preschool to Grade 2) or children with significant physical, mental, or emotional disabilities should be avoided. Regardless of their age, students should never be asked to cross a divided highway. Do not attempt to cross students if you are driving a small school vehicle without red student flashers.
- *Age and characteristics of the child.* An older student may be capable of safely crossing a particular roadway, while a younger child may not. There is no state requirement mandating school districts to pick up and drop off children at their homes. Most children can safely handle a neighborhood "group" stop. However, a child with special needs may require a house stop.

Never change the location of a bus stop on your own.

3.4.2 Unauthorized route and stop changes.

Never change the location of a bus stop on your own. Don't change your route without official authorization from your office.

If you think a stop or a route should be altered in some way, discuss it with your supervisor.

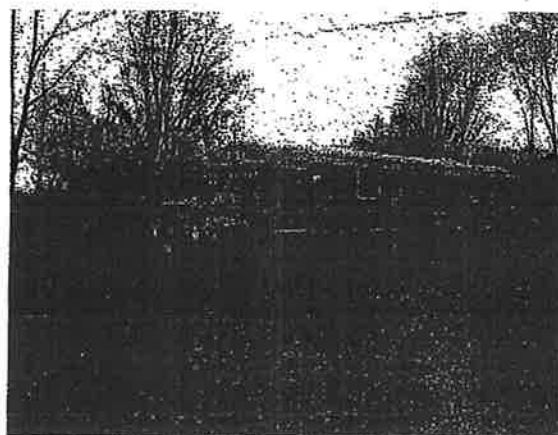
If a parent comes to your bus to request a change in their child's stop – for instance, a parent asks you to pick up a child in front of the house instead of at a group stop down the street – courteously advise the parent to call the transportation office.

Unauthorized route changes can be dangerous. If a substitute driver takes your run, any changes you've made on your own, which are not on the route sheet, can confuse both the substitute and the children. If you've been picking up a child at home instead of at the neighborhood group stop listed on the route sheet, that child might enter the roadway as the bus passes the house.

If a child is hurt in a scenario such as the one discussed above, you could be held personally liable. A school bus driver's responsibility for the care and custody of children includes picking them up and dropping them off at school district-approved locations and following school district-approved routes.

If you must re-route your bus because of a temporary condition, such as road repairs, severe weather, a motor vehicle accident or house fire in the area, notify base of the situation by radio. Letting your office know protects everyone.

3.4.3 Turnarounds. Many school districts utilize bus turnarounds, especially in rural



areas where "going around the block" could add many miles to a route. Most turnarounds require backing. All turnarounds should be approved by your router or supervisor.

Scan the area carefully before beginning to turn around. Before backing, position your bus to give you the best view of the area you'll be backing into. Although school buses are equipped with back-up beepers, always "honk three times and pause" before starting to back. Back-up beepers can be hard to hear in some situations. Honking gets the attention of anyone nearby, and pausing before starting to back gives them time to get out of your way.

If you're fortunate enough to have an attendant on board, ask your attendant to observe (from inside the bus) you as you back up. If you don't have an attendant, consider using a reliable older student as a spotter (again, from inside the bus only). Even with a spotter, the responsibility for preventing an accident is still yours – you're the driver. But a second set of eyes while backing is always safer. Before you begin backing, decide on a signal for the spotter to alert you of a hazard – a simple "Stop!" works best.

Always back slowly. Dead idle may be too fast – keep your foot on the brake.

Overconfidence about backing can result in a tragedy. Backing a school bus is always risky.

Winter conditions make turnarounds even more challenging. Snow can make it hard to know exactly where the edge of the turnaround is. Back up only as far as necessary to get your bus turned around. If a turnaround looks too snow-filled or slippery to negotiate safely, contact base. Area highway departments respond quickly to any call to assist a school bus. If you do get stuck in a turnaround, contact base. Trying to get out on your own by repeatedly "rocking" your bus back and forth can make things worse, and with children on board, it can be dangerous. Do not be embarrassed about asking for help – the safety of the children is all that matters.

In the morning, pick up
waiting children before
backing up; in the
afternoon, back up before
dropping off children.

Turnarounds at or near bus stops are especially hazardous. When children are nearby, anything can happen. If your route requires you to back up at or near a bus stop, always follow this procedure: in the morning, pick up waiting children before backing up; in the afternoon, back up before dropping off children. Children are safest when they're on board your bus.

3.4.4 Safety cushion. Whenever possible, keep students out of the rear seats of your bus. Use the last row only when other seats are filled.

Passengers in the last row are more exposed to injury if your bus is struck from behind.

Because school buses routinely stop in the roadway to receive or discharge students, a rear end collision is one of the most common types of school bus accidents. School buses have also been struck in the rear while stopped at railroad crossings.

School buses are designed to protect children in collisions. However, if the vehicle striking your bus from the rear is a large commercial vehicle such as a truck or another bus, the collision can be so severe that children in the rear seats can be seriously injured or killed. Keeping children out of the rear seats is a simple and no-cost way to provide even a higher level of safety.

Older students almost always prefer to sit way in the back – being as far away from adults as possible is part of being a teenager. Teaching them to stay out of the back seats takes persistence. Take the time to really explain the safety reason behind the rule. Many school bus drivers have been very successful at convincing children of all ages to stay out the rear seats.

The "safety cushion" rule is as important on sports and field trips as it is on regular routes. It is especially important on any route utilizing a high speed roadway with heavy truck traffic.

3.5 Unit 3 Review

Write down or circle the best answer(s).

1. Why is the student loading/unloading process considered "the moment of truth" for a school bus driver?

- a. Three of every four student fatalities occur at the bus stop.
- b. Children are naturally impulsive and unpredictable.
- c. All school buses have blind spots where a child could be hidden from direct view.

☒ d. All of the above.

2. Statistically, when are children most at risk?

- a. Getting on a bus in the morning.
- ☒ b. Getting off a bus in the afternoon.
- c. Riding on the bus in a residential neighborhood.
- d. Riding on the bus on the highway.

3. TRUE or FALSE? "Slow down well before you get to a bus stop. Last-second braking with children nearby is a recipe for disaster." **T**

4. TRUE or FALSE? "Secure your bus at every bus stop." **T**

5. TRUE or FALSE? "To save time at the bus stop, children should get out of their seats and move to the front of the bus as you approach their stop." **F**

6. TRUE or FALSE? "It is against the law to drive a school bus with the crossover mirrors out of adjustment." **T**

7. What is the "universal danger signal" and what does it mean?

- a. Flash headlights – child should freeze in the roadway.
- b. Honk horn – child should freeze in the roadway.
- c. Wave your hands and yell – child should run.
- ☒ d. Honk horn – child should immediately return to the side of the road he/she started from.

8. What's the most important purpose of crossover mirrors?

- a. To help you locate a child you know you've lost track of.
- ☒ b. To check for children you didn't know you'd lost track of.
- c. To check for cars pulling next to you while driving.
- d. To check your flashers during the pre-trip.

9. What should you do if you feel a bus stop is unusually hazardous, or you have an idea for improving safety on your route?

- a. Make the change on your own – it is the bus driver's responsibility to establish the location of bus stops.
- ☒ b. Discuss it with your supervisor.
- c. Continue doing the route as written – routes cannot be changed during the school year.
- d. None of the above.

10. What's the most important reason students should stay out of the rear seats whenever possible?

- a. *You can't hear what they're saying.*
- b. *Takes them longer to get off the bus at their stops.*
- (c.) *They are more exposed to injury if a vehicle strikes the back of your bus.*
- d. *There is no reason to keep students out of the rear seats.*

UNIT 3 NOTES & QUESTIONS

CORE UNIT 4: TRANSPORTING STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Unit 4 Topics

- 4.1 Most School Buses Transport Children with Special Needs
- 4.2 Children with Special Needs Are Diverse
- 4.3 Special Education Terms and Concepts
- 4.4 Sensitivity
- 4.5 Emergency Concerns
- 4.6 Unit 4 Review

Introduction

Serving children with disabilities is a big part of the modern educational system. Disabled children represent 10-20% of the student population in most school districts today. Every New York State school bus driver needs to know how to provide safe, caring transportation for children with special needs.

4.1 Most School Buses Transport Children with Special Needs

4.1.1 You will be working with disabled children. Most children with disabilities ride regular school buses. Most New York State

school bus drivers transport children with special needs.

4.1.2 The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Our country has come a long way in how we treat people with disabilities. Throughout history, discrimination against the disabled has been as deeply rooted and destructive as racial prejudice. Just a generation ago, children who were considered "handicapped" seldom had a chance to go to school. Most adults with disabilities spent their entire lives completely segregated from society – locked up in dreary institutions or hidden away in a back room of their family's home.

In the 1970s, America experienced a virtual revolution in attitudes and laws concerning disabled children. Building on our nation's core belief in equal opportunity for all, and inspired by the struggles for equality of other neglected and misunderstood groups, parents of disabled children banded together and demanded a decent education for their children.

The watershed Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), passed by the U.S. Congress in 1975, was the culmination of countless local battles for equal rights for disabled children. The law of the land now required school districts to provide a "free and appropriate public education" for all children, disabled or not.

4.1.3 Key role of the school bus in educating children with special needs. One of the key barriers to meeting the new mandate to provide an education to children with disabilities was getting them to and from school. Transporting children with physical, mental, and emotional disabilities created many new challenges for school districts. From the early years of IDEA, educating

children with special needs has depended in a deep way on the skills, resourcefulness, and caring of school bus drivers and attendants.

Transporting children with special needs will never be simple or easy. The *Pre-Service Course* is only a starting point of what you will need to continue learning throughout your career to transport children with disabilities as safely and humanely as possible.

Transporting children with special needs will never be simple or easy – it has always depended on the skills, resourcefulness, and caring of school bus drivers and attendants.

4.2 Children with Special Needs Are Diverse

4.2.1 Every child is unique. A child with a disability is a child, not a disability. Every child, disabled or not, is an individual with a unique personality. All children have their own hopes and fears.

Within every disability category discussed below, individual children display a wide spectrum of characteristics and behaviors.

4.2.2 General disability categories.

Although no two children within a disability category are alike, it's helpful for school bus drivers to be familiar with the typical characteristics of the disabled students they may be working with.

The New York State Education Department defines thirteen types of disabilities eligible for special education services. These specific

disabilities can be grouped into three general categories:

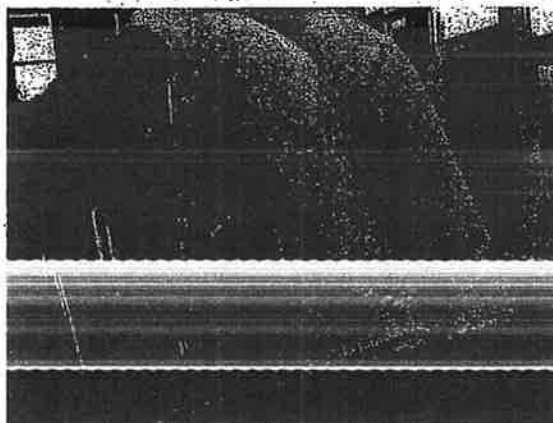
1. Physical disabilities
2. Mental disabilities
3. Emotional disabilities

4.2.3 Types of physical disabilities. New York State identifies six types of physical disabilities that may qualify a child for special education services:

- 1) "Orthopedic impairment" refers to a physical problem affecting a child's bones, muscles, joints, or tendons. The category includes birth defects such as clubfoot or absence of a limb, as well as skeletal problems caused by disease (polio, bone tuberculosis, spina bifida, etc.), or impairments from other causes (cerebral palsy, amputation, severe fractures, etc.).

Some children with orthopedic impairments use wheelchairs, walkers, or other types of mobility devices to get around. They may need to be transported on a lift-equipped bus.

Safely transporting children using mobility devices requires the highest degree of caution and attention to detail. A school bus emergency involving children in wheelchairs poses exceptional challenges. (Optional Unit 11, "Transporting Students Using



Wheelchairs, covers safety procedures for loading, securing, and transporting students using wheelchairs and other mobility devices.)

Children with orthopedic disabilities often receive specialized services from a physical therapist (PT) or occupational therapist (OT). Your school's PT or OT can be a valuable source of information about how to safely transport a child with orthopedic impairments.

2) "Deafness" refers to a hearing impairment so severe that the child has difficulty processing linguistic information through hearing, even with a hearing aid.

3) "Hearing impairment" indicates a less severe hearing loss, or an intermittent hearing loss, that still adversely affects the child's educational performance.

Most deaf and hearing impaired children ride the regular school bus along with their non-disabled peers and many are fully integrated into the typical educational program at school. Others attend special schools for deaf children. Many deaf children can communicate effectively both with hearing and non-hearing individuals.

Many deaf children can communicate effectively both with hearing and non-hearing individuals.

4) "Visual impairment including blindness" indicates a vision problem so severe that, even with correction, a student's educational performance is adversely impacted. The category includes both partially sighted and completely blind children. Blind children often ride a regular school bus with their sighted peers. Emergency planning should

take into account how to guide a blind child safely off the bus in an evacuation.

5) "Deaf-blindness" includes children who have simultaneous hearing and visual impairments, creating substantial communication barriers. Deaf-blind children's developmental and educational needs often require specialized programs beyond those offered to deaf or blind students. Careful emergency planning is essential when transporting deaf-blind children.

6) "Other health-impairment" is a large disability category, covering a wide variety of chronic and/or acute health conditions that affect a child's ability to function successfully in a school environment.

Health problems that may qualify a child as disabled include heart conditions, tuberculosis, rheumatic fever, nephritis, asthma, sickle cell anemia, hemophilia, epilepsy, lead poisoning, leukemia, and diabetes. Children who are weakened or inattentive due to an illness require special caution during the bus ride.

Tourette syndrome, attention deficit disorder (ADD), and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) are also included in the "other health impaired" disability category. Children with Tourette syndrome may exhibit repetitive, inappropriate behaviors such as uncontrollable cursing.

Children with ADD or ADHD seldom show physical signs of their conditions. They look like any other child but often have difficulty maintaining focus on a particular goal or task. Their impulsive behaviors can be challenging for the bus ride.

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Free approp. public education - find free education specifically designed

"Autism" is a developmental disability affecting the ability to communicate and interact with others – the term covers a wide spectrum of behaviors.

4.2.4 Types of mental disabilities. New York State identifies five types of mental impairments that may qualify a student for special education services:

4 - 1) "Autism" is a developmental disability affecting the ability to communicate and interact with others. The incidence of autism among children has grown exponentially over the past generation. Approximately one out of every 110 children born today have some form of autism.

The term autism covers a wide spectrum of behaviors. "Asperger Syndrome" is a milder form of autism. Children with Asperger Syndrome are usually of typical or higher intelligence and can often function effectively in the typical school environment. Children with more severe forms of autism may display characteristic repetitive movements such as rocking or waving, or "echolalia," compulsively repeated phrases or words.

Many children on the autism spectrum have a strong preference for predictable patterns and order. Sudden changes – for instance, an unavoidable detour on your bus route – can be very difficult for children with autism.

Some children with autism can communicate effectively with pictures (story boards) or keyboards.

2) "Learning disability" is a disorder involving the processing of spoken or written language. Children with learning disabilities may have difficulty listening, thinking, speaking, reading, writing, spelling, or doing math. Dyslexia is one form of learning disability. The term does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of environmental, cultural or economic disadvantage.

3) "Speech or language impairment" is a communication disorder, such as stuttering or other language or voice impairment. To be considered a disability, the disorder must be severe enough to adversely affect a child's performance in school. Children with speech delays or impairment are frequent targets of teasing and bullying.

4) "Mental retardation" indicates generally sub average intellectual functioning, existing simultaneously with other developmental delays and behaviors. Children with mental retardation are often affectionate, and may readily develop strong emotional attachments. Adults in charge must be cautious to deter inappropriate interactions.

5) "Traumatic brain injury" is the result of a blow to the head or because of certain medical conditions such as stroke, encephalitis, aneurysm, or a brain tumor, causing impaired thinking, language, memory, or judgment. Perceptual and motor skills and psychosocial behavior can also be affected. Children who have suffered a traumatic brain injury can be highly unpredictable.

4.2.5 Emotional disability. Children are considered "emotionally disturbed" when they exhibit a prolonged and pronounced inability to learn that cannot be explained by a lack of intelligence, sensory disabilities, or illness.

Children who are emotionally disturbed often exhibit inappropriate behaviors or feelings under otherwise normal circumstances. They frequently have trouble establishing friendships with peers or positive interpersonal relationships with teachers.

Transporting children with emotional disturbance can be very challenging, requiring consistent self-control and psychological savvy.

Pervasive unhappiness or depression is characteristic of children with emotional disturbance. Physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems are common. Schizophrenia is a form of emotional disturbance.

Transporting children with emotional disturbance can be very challenging. Their frequent volatility and inappropriate behavior require consistent self-control and psychological savvy from the adults in charge.

4.2.6 Multiple disabilities. A child with "multiple disabilities" has two or more simultaneous impairments, such as mental retardation and visual impairment, mental retardation and orthopedic impairment, etc., resulting in such severe educational needs that they cannot be met in a special education program designed solely for one of the impairments.

Some of these students with multiple disabilities are "medically fragile". Many school districts now transport medically fragile children to and from school every day. Medically fragile children have potentially

life-threatening health problems. They may need medical equipment such as oxygen during the bus ride. Their condition may be serious enough that an attendant or even a nurse must accompany them on the bus ride. In rare cases, severely ill children may have a "Do Not Resuscitate" order (DNR) in place. A DNR raises legal and emotional issues that go well beyond the scope of this course. If you are asked to transport a child with a DNR, your supervisor will provide you with the information and support needed to carry out such a sensitive mission.

4.3 Special Education Terms and Concepts

As a school bus driver, you need to understand the meaning of key terms used in special education.

4.3.1 Committee on Special Education

By law, each New York State school district has a "CSE." A CSE is made up of special education teachers and staff, administrators, and parents. Its purpose is to identify and assess children who may need special education services, including specialized transportation arrangements such as a lift-equipped bus, bus attendant, house stop, etc. Transportation representatives are sometimes asked to participate in CSE meetings.

4.3.2 Individualized Education Program

An "IEP" must be created for each student who the CSE identifies with a need for special education or related services, which can include special transportation arrangements. IEPs define specific educational, social, and behavioral goals for each child.

Schools must provide any services specified on a child's IEP. For instance, if the IEP indicates a child needs a bus attendant, the district cannot legally ignore the requirement, even for one day. If the IEP specifies that the attendant must be CPR-certified, the district must comply.

4.3.3 Confidentiality. Unnecessarily revealing personal information about students or their families is a violation of state and federal law. The only exception to this rule is if the information is necessary in an emergency to protect a child.

Parents have successfully sued school districts and bus drivers for violating confidentiality laws. A student's disability, behavior, or family situation should never be discussed in the local diner or in front of other students on your bus.

Unnecessarily revealing personal information about students or their families is a violation of state and federal law.

If you have questions about the students you transport or feel you need more information to ensure their safety during the bus ride, ask your supervisor or SBDI for help. It is fully appropriate and professional for school bus drivers to ask questions about a child's health, behavior, or physical needs if the information could help ensure that child's safety on the bus.

Any student information carried on your bus — route information such as names, ages, addresses, and phone numbers — should be securely maintained. It should be accessible

only to those who are directly responsible for protecting the student, such as a substitute driver or emergency responders.

Avoid using actual student names over the radio whenever possible. Who knows who's listening? When using the radio, try to find a way to say what you need to say without saying it.

4.4 Sensitivity

4.4.1 Words are important. Outmoded words keep negative stereotypes and demeaning attitudes alive. A thoughtless comment about a child can leave a lasting scar. Sensitivity towards children with disabilities begins with a self-examination of how we speak — about them and to them.

Our society has a long history of savage verbal abuse aimed at the "handicapped." Making fun of disabled people was routinely accepted long after racist and sexist "jokes" were considered strictly off-limits. Professional school bus drivers get to know their children as individuals rather than relying on rude stereotypes.

Unfortunately, many children on school buses have overheard extremely demeaning comments from transportation staff, such as "She's just a vegetable — why are we even bothering to take her to school?" Always assume children can understand what you're saying. The child who is the subject of the remark is hurt; the other children are learning negative behavior modeled by you.

When speaking about a child with a disability, try to use "people-first" language. Refer to the child first, then the disability. For instance, instead of saying "blind child," say "a child who is blind." Avoid the use of negative

terminology that reinforces outmoded stereotypes about people with disabilities. For instance, instead of the phrase “confined to a wheelchair,” which implies that the individual is helplessly imprisoned, say “uses a wheelchair.” Language matters! Even the common term “handicap” implies helplessness. The ancient origin of the word “handicap” is “cap in hand,” meaning “beggar.”

Tips for interacting effectively with children with disabilities include:

- Listen to them. If the child has difficulty speaking, listen attentively and patiently. Don't finish the child's sentences. If the child has difficulty hearing or comprehending, speak slowly and in short sentences.

A thoughtless comment overheard by a child can leave a lasting scar.

- Assume children with disabilities *can* do something. Don't assume they're helpless. Ask if they need your help.
- When speaking at length with a child who uses a wheelchair, try to place yourself at their eye level.
- When speaking with a child who has a visual impairment, identify yourself before speaking.
- Treat teenagers with disabilities as teenagers, not as young children.
- Don't lean against or hang onto a child's wheelchair. The wheelchair is part of the child's personal space.
- If a child using a wheelchair can't fasten the lap or shoulder belts on

his/her own, be as sensitive and non-intrusive as possible when doing it for the child. Think how it would feel if someone was doing it for you.

Whenever possible, keep the back of your hand instead of your palm against the child's body as you work on the belts.

Children, too, can be horribly insensitive to each other. For instance, the time-honored tradition of referring to the special education bus as the “retard bus” still lives on today in some school systems. As a school bus driver, you are a role model. Many children will look up to you. Teach them to care for each other and befriend each other despite their differences.

4.4.2 PJ's Law. In 2005, a child with autism was viciously and repeatedly belittled by a bus driver and attendant. Caught on tape, the ugly incident was so disturbing to parents and educators that a new state law, known as “PJ's Law,” was passed. PJ's Law requires annual sensitivity training for all transportation staff.

Being sensitive does not mean treating children with disabilities as though they were helpless. People with disabilities do not need pity. Children with disabilities have the same natural desire for independence as all other children. One of the main goals of special education is to encourage each student with a disability to be as independent as possible.

Like all children, children with disabilities have a natural desire for independence.

On your bus, encourage children to do as much for themselves as they can. For

instance, many children who use a mobility device are fully capable of locking or unlocking the wheelchair brake, latching or unlatching lap and shoulder belts, etc.

Throughout history, people with physical, mental, and emotional disabilities have accomplished incredible feats in government, business, education, the arts, sports, and in daily life.

4.5 Emergency Concerns

Unit 5, "Emergency Preparedness," will prepare you for some of the most common emergency situations you may face as a school bus driver. However, you should be aware of specialized emergency concerns when transporting students with special needs.

4.5.1 Evacuation plan. When driving a run that includes children with limited mobility or other physical or mental conditions that could impede their rapid evacuation, you need a crystal-clear plan of exactly how you will get them out of the bus if an emergency occurs. Which children will you take out first? In what order? From which exit? If you have a bus attendant, exactly what will he or she be doing? Who will be outside to help students off the bus, and who will stay inside to get them to the exit?

It's unrealistic and dangerous to assume that you will know what to do in an emergency situation without outlining a plan. Panic and confusion can cost valuable time. In some situations, such as a fire, you may have only two minutes to get all children out of your bus. During an actual emergency there's no time to figure out how to quickly remove children from your bus. You need to decide ahead of time.

Create a specific plan for two types of emergencies: 1) rear door evacuation (e.g., if the engine catches on fire); and 2) passenger door evacuation (e.g., if there's a fire at the back of your bus).

Ask your SBDI or supervisor to help you with your plan. Take enough time to really think it through. Use a blackboard to sketch out where children are seated and where the emergency exits are located on your bus. Carefully consider every child's disability and how it impacts your emergency plans.

You need to practice the plan. Practice might reveal a potential bottleneck you didn't notice when the plan was only on the blackboard. Practice also prepares your students.

Any practice evacuation involving children with special mental, physical, or emotional needs must be conducted with the full approval and active support of the school and your supervisor. Children's teachers and classroom aides may be able to observe and assist as necessary. Preventing an injury to a vulnerable student during the drill must be a priority.

4.5.2 Location of emergency services along the route. When transporting children with special needs, learn the location of all emergency services along your daily route. This is especially important with medically fragile children. This includes hospitals, clinics, ambulance terminals, fire departments, and police stations. In a serious emergency, it may be faster to drive to a facility than having emergency personnel come to the bus. Discuss this issue with your supervisor.

4.6 Unit 4 Review

Write down or circle the best answer(s).

1. Which statement below is not true?

- a. Most children with disabilities ride regular school buses.
- b. Most New York State school bus drivers transport children with special needs.
- c. With what we know today, transporting children with disabilities has become much simpler.
- d. Just a generation ago, children with disabilities seldom had a chance to go to school.

2. Which statement(s) below are true?

- a. A child with a disability is a child, not a disability.
- b. Every child, disabled or not, is an individual with a unique personality.
- c. Within every disability category, individual children display a wide spectrum of characteristics and behaviors.

(d) All statements are true.

3. A physical problem affecting a child's bones, muscles, joints, or tendons is considered what type of disability?

"orthopedic impairment"

cerebral palsy, severe fractures, ect.

4. An inability to communicate and interact with others and repetitive movements such as rocking or waving is characteristic of what type of disability?

autism

5. TRUE or FALSE? "Many deaf children can communicate effectively both with hearing and non-hearing individuals."

6. ~~TRUE~~ or FALSE? "Few school districts transport medically fragile children."

7. Which statement below is not typical of children with emotional disturbance?

- (a) Behaves normally under normal circumstances.
- b. Trouble maintaining friendships with peers.
- c. Pervasive unhappiness or depression.
- d. Physical symptoms due to personal or school problems.

8. What does "CSE" stand for?

Committee on Special Education

Identify & assess children who need special educ. services
Transportation, IEP, home stays

9. What does "IEP" stand for?

Individualized Education program

10. TRUE or ~~FALSE~~? "Revealing personal information about students or their families is a violation of state and federal law."

11. Which statement(s) below are true?

- a. A thoughtless comment about a child can leave a lasting scar.
- b. Sensitivity towards children with disabilities begins with an examination of how we speak.
- c. Our society has a long history of savage verbal abuse aimed at the disabled.

(d) All the above statements are true

UNIT 4 NOTES & QUESTIONS

CORE UNIT 5: EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Unit 5 Topics

- 5.1 What to Do If You've Had an Accident
- 5.2 Breakdowns
- 5.3 Radio Use in an Emergency
- 5.4 School Bus Fires and Wires
- 5.5 Evacuations
- 5.6 Unit 5 Review

Introduction

Core Unit 5 of the *Pre-Service Course* will prepare you to handle emergencies you may encounter as you drive a school bus. From the first day you transport students, you must be mentally prepared for a sudden emergency.

5.1 What to Do If You've Had an Accident

5.1.1 Report it at once. School buses are very safe, but the road is a dangerous place. Traffic accidents are a fact of life. School buses survive most crashes remarkably well. As long as children are properly seated, serious injuries to children are rare. But even after a minor incident, calming children and assessing possible injuries can be a challenge.

No matter how minor, it is extremely important to immediately report an accident, crash, or incident from the scene by radio. What at first seems like a "minor" incident may turn out to be not so minor. Student injuries are not always apparent at first. Immediate reporting of all incidents from the scene protects both you and your students. If the radio isn't working or you're out of range, use a cell phone to contact base or 911. If you can't get through, ask a bystander or Good Samaritan to call for help.

5.1.2 Stay calm. Keeping students calm until help arrives is very important. Children pick up quickly on adult emotions. They can panic if they think someone is hurt. Reassure them that "everything is OK" – even if you aren't entirely sure that's the case.

Accounting for all students after an accident is extremely important. Even in a minor incident, and even if they seem uninjured, children should not be permitted to leave an accident scene without school district authorization. If parents make it to the scene before school officials arrive, ask them to stay at the scene to comfort their children until district and medical personnel arrive.

5.1.3 Protect the scene. It is crucial to protect the accident scene as quickly as possible. A disabled bus stopped in or next to the road could easily be struck again by another vehicle. A minor fender bender could quickly turn into a serious incident. Many motorists are killed every year when their disabled vehicle is struck by another.

Activate your 4-way hazard flashers at once. If your bus is equipped with a roof-mounted strobe light, turn it on. Arrange to have emergency triangle reflectors set up as soon as possible to alert other motorists. Do not leave students unattended on the bus to place the

reflectors, even for a few moments, except in exceptional circumstances when the urgent danger of a second crash outweighs other considerations.

It is crucial to protect the accident scene as quickly as possible.

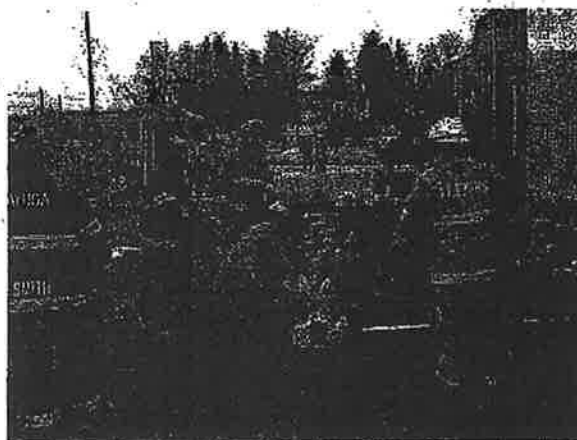
It is better to ask a Good Samaritan who has come to the accident scene to set out the reflectors. Tell the Good Samaritan exactly what to do. Setting up triangle reflectors is tricky. It's easy to break them, or place them improperly so they fall over and can't be seen by motorists. Practice how to set them up correctly before you begin transporting students.

After an accident, do not move your bus, unless it is positioned where a second collision is possible. If moving is necessary to prevent another vehicle from crashing into your bus, pull off the roadway to a safer area nearby, even before police arrive if you must. Notify base by radio that you're moving the bus off the roadway to prevent a second collision.

5.1.4 Cooperate with emergency responders. Be prepared to provide emergency responders with an accurate seating chart as they arrive on the scene. They will need to know how many students (and any other passengers, such as a bus attendant) were on board your bus. If the accident took place at or near a bus stop and one or more students were off the bus when the incident occurred, let emergency personnel know.

Inform emergency personnel as soon as they arrive on the scene of any students with special needs or medical conditions.

Once emergency responders are on the scene, let them do their jobs.



Don't get into an argument with the "other motorist" at the accident scene, and if the media comes to the scene, don't be a spokesperson for your school district or bus company. Ask the reporter to speak to your supervisor.

Be forthright and honest about what happened when interviewed by the police or your supervisor.

[illegible]

5.2 Breakdowns

5.2.1 Report possible mechanical problems at once. When transporting students, a mechanical problem is more than just an inconvenience. A breakdown exposes students to increased risk. A disabled bus in or near the roadway could be struck by another vehicle. Students could be subjected to extreme weather conditions.

A thorough pre-trip inspection reduces the chance of a breakdown, but mechanical problems could still develop on the route. Always be on the lookout for early warning signs of a possible mechanical problem. Scan your gauges regularly for signs that a mechanical component (e.g., alternator, battery, engine, transmission) is beginning to fail. Know what your gauges should read when the component is operating normally. If you're not sure what all gauges should read, ask a school bus technician (mechanic) before leaving the bus yard. There's no embarrassment in asking for help – it's the sign of a professional driver.

Other clues that something is not right include unusual noises (e.g., knocking, banging, grinding, whining, screeching), unusual smells (e.g., fuel, hot radiator, burning or electrical), and a change in how the vehicle handles (e.g., pulling to one side, "loose" steering, soft brakes, bouncing, engine sluggish or skipping). Stay alert and use your senses – sound, sight, smell, touch – to detect a developing problem early.

Early warning of a possible mechanical problem allows you to pull over in a safe location rather than breaking down in the middle of the road where your students would be much more exposed to danger.

Do not continue on your route or trip if you suspect a mechanical problem. Do not wait until you get back to base to report the problem. Notify base by radio at once. If you can't reach base by radio, pull over in a safe location and use a cell phone.

Don't continue on your route or trip if you suspect a mechanical problem – don't wait until you get back to base to report it.

5.2.2 Stop in a safe location. As after an accident, a bus with a mechanical problem stopped in the roadway could easily be struck by another vehicle. Pull off the road to a safe location such as a parking lot as soon as a problem is suspected. If you must stop along the road, look for a wide shoulder with good visibility to other motorists. Be careful when pulling off the road – be alert for soft shoulders and ditches. Turn on your 4-way hazard flashers and set out reflectors as soon as possible.

5.2.3 If your bus is stuck. Even skilled bus drivers occasionally get stuck in snow, ice, or other slippery conditions. Gently moving your bus forward and back may provide enough traction to get going again. However, repeatedly rocking the bus back and forth, or spinning the drive tires in an effort to get going, can be dangerous, especially with children on board. Tires can catch fire if spun hard, or your bus could break loose unexpectedly and slide sideways into a ditch or other hazard.

Notify base by radio as soon as you realize you're stuck. Most bus drivers have had it happen; it's nothing to be embarrassed about.

If your bus must be towed out, get students out first unless extremely severe weather or other hazards such as exposure to traffic make it safer to keep them on board.

Towing a bus can be dangerous, even for short distances. The tow line could snap or the bus could tip. Escort students to a safe spot well away from the action. Keep them together. Have younger students buddy up.

Notify base by radio as soon as you realize you're stuck. Most bus drivers have had it happen – it's nothing to be embarrassed about.

5.2.4 Transferring students to a replacement bus. Transferring students from your disabled bus to a replacement bus requires careful attention by both bus drivers. Activate your red student flashers and 4-way hazard flashers before beginning the transfer. Younger students should hold hands and buddy up. If Good Samaritans have come to the scene, they might be able to help out by directing students from one bus to the other. Tell them exactly what you want them to do.

Never leave students unattended on your bus, even for a few moments, or let them enter the replacement bus unless you or the other driver is on board.

Do a student count to make sure everyone is on the replacement bus before you pull away.

5.3 Radio Use in an Emergency

5.3.1 Getting help quickly is the priority. School buses are routinely exposed to a wide variety of dangerous situations on the road: challenging weather and traffic conditions, mechanical problems, and student behavior problems are only the most common. School bus emergencies happen every day.

You must be mentally prepared to decisively respond to a sudden emergency from the first day you transport students. Being ready for an emergency is one of your most important responsibilities as a school bus driver.

Being prepared for a sudden emergency is one of your most important responsibilities as a school bus driver.

Every school bus emergency is different, of course, but there is a common theme in how you should respond: Get help to the scene as quickly as possible. Even in a relatively minor incident (e.g., fender-bender with no apparent injuries, breakdown with the bus pulled safely off the road), calming and controlling dozens of children on your bus will not be easy.

In a more severe incident, such as a serious crash or bus fire, getting help to the scene quickly could be the difference between life and death.

During any emergency, contact base by radio or 911 by cell phone as soon as possible. If at all possible, make the initial call before getting out of your seat. Getting help headed your way is the priority.

5.3.2 Conveying critical information. Some school districts and bus companies use a system of radio codes to designate various emergencies. "10-50" is a common radio code for accident. If your employer uses radio codes, find out what they are. Memorize them or tape a list of codes to your clipboard.

Many school districts have stopped using radio codes because they are so easily forgotten or confused in the stress of a real emergency. Plain speaking is usually the most effective way to communicate during an actual emergency.

Collect your thoughts *before* speaking over the radio. Convey the most important information clearly. Give your bus number, where you're located, and a brief description of what happened.

Local policies vary on exactly what you should say first. One example is: "This is bus number X and I have an emergency. I am located at Smith and Jones Street and have had an accident. There may be injuries."

Using the word "emergency" early in your transmission alerts your dispatcher, other bus drivers, and anyone else listening in that this is not a routine radio call.

Avoid giving too much information – student names should be mentioned over the radio only in exceptional circumstances when base needs to know the identity of a particular student to help direct the appropriate response.

Use a separate emergency channel if one is provided in your radio system. If you have questions about how to switch channels or any other questions about operating your two-way radio, ask your instructor or a technician to show you. Radio controls can be tricky.

Other bus drivers in the fleet should stay off the air when there's an emergency.

5.3.3 Cell phone use in an emergency. Once your bus is stopped, a cell phone can be extremely helpful in an emergency. Using a cell phone instead of the two-way radio lets you give more secure and detailed communication to base about what has happened. The rest of the community won't hear everything you say.

5.4 School Bus Fires and Wires

5.4.1 School bus fires do happen. School bus fires occur more frequently than is commonly thought. Bus fires can be caused by a variety of mechanical or electrical system problems, by collisions, or even by student vandals.

Students should be evacuated at once if there's any indication of a possible fire.

School buses can burn quickly in some situations. Once seat cushions have ignited, it takes less than two minutes for heat and fumes to make the passenger compartment unsurvivable.

Because bus fires can spread fast and are potentially lethal, any sign of a possible fire (e.g., smoke, burning or hot electrical smell, warnings from other motorists) should be taken seriously. Students should be evacuated at once if there's any indication of a possible fire.

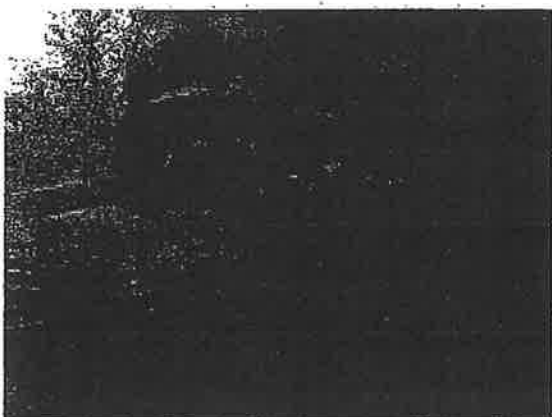
5.4.2 Typical fire scenarios. The two most common bus fire scenarios are front engine fires and fires at the rear of your bus due to a crash. You should be prepared to respond to

less than 2 minutes
 7/14/15
 in back
 1 on road

both scenarios. Your student passengers should be trained to respond to them as well.

You may first become aware of a front engine fire when smoke or flames enter the passenger compartment under the dash near your seat. Electrical power and/or vehicle controls may be lost. After calling base and stopping in a safe area off the road, shut the bus off and immediately begin a rear-door evacuation.

Even after you are certain all students are safely off the bus, don't open the hood to try



to extinguish an engine fire. Opening the hood lets oxygen flood in and may cause the fire to flare up. You could be seriously burned. Let the fire department handle any school bus fire. If you've gotten students to safety, you've done your job.

If another vehicle crashes into the rear of your bus while you're stopped, it could catch fire. It could catch fire even though there's little or no damage to your bus. Spilled gasoline from the other vehicle can increase the danger. Begin a front door evacuation.

If the other vehicle is on fire, it may be quicker and safer to move your bus a safe distance away from the burning vehicle before evacuating the students.

5.4.3 Fire extinguishers. Fire extinguishers are too small to put out a serious bus fire. As

a bus driver, your priority is always to get the students to safety.

Let fire crews extinguish the fire when they come on the scene.

In incidents where you are certain all students are safely away from danger, you may choose to use a fire extinguisher to try to put out a small fire on your bus. A fire in the bus wastebasket that hasn't spread to other parts of the bus, for instance, is the size a bus extinguisher might be able to handle.

Fire extinguishers are too small to put out a serious bus fire — your priority is always to get students safely off the bus.

Learn how to use a fire extinguisher correctly. Never try to fight a fire unless you have a clear way out — don't put yourself in a position where the fire could corner you if it flares up.

Stand several feet back from the fire and pull the extinguisher pin. Point the extinguisher at the base of the fire and squeeze the handle. Make gentle sweeping motions as you aim the spray at the base of the fire, not the flames. Continue until the fire is completely out.

5.4.4 Wire on bus. School buses can also come in contact with electrical lines. Because buses are higher than most vehicles using local residential roads where you're picking up or dropping off students, your bus is more likely to snag a low-hanging wire that's been knocked down due to high winds or an ice storm.

You need to know what to do if an electrical wire is touching your bus. Assume that the

line is charged and dangerous. Even what appears to be “only a phone line” may be crossing a high voltage line a short distance away. Stay inside and keep all passengers inside. Use a cell phone to contact 911.

Never try to remove a wire on your own. You could be killed. This is a job for a utility crew or the fire department.

Evacuate your students only as a last resort – if your bus is on fire, or in some other severe and imminent danger. If you must evacuate, all passengers must jump from the bus so they are never touching both the bus and the ground at the same time.

Don’t let Good Samaritans come close to the bus to ask if they can help. They could be electrocuted. If it’s raining or the ground is wet, even the area around the bus could be charged and dangerous.

5.5 Evacuations

5.5.1 Make the “evacuation decision.”

Evacuation is not always the best response to a school bus emergency.

Evacuating children is dangerous in itself. Children could be injured as they exit the bus, or could wander off during an evacuation and be struck by another motorist or hurt in some other way. Evacuation should never be undertaken lightly.

In an emergency, you are responsible for assessing the situation and deciding what’s best for your students.

There is no absolute rule about when to evacuate students and when to keep them on the bus. Every emergency is different. In an emergency, you are responsible for assessing the situation and deciding what’s best for your students. Factors to be taken into account include the nature of the emergency (e.g., possibility of fire or second collision), the nature of the students (e.g., age, numbers, special needs), and the safety of the area they would be evacuated into (e.g., availability of a safe area off the roadway, weather conditions, presence of other hazards near the bus).

You are in charge of the emergency scene until law enforcement, emergency responders, or your supervisor arrives. After deciding what’s safest, give clear and decisive instructions to your students to either stay on board or begin an evacuation.

If you decide to evacuate, it is your responsibility to direct students to the best exit or exits for the situation.

5.5.2 Determine the “best exit.” If you decide to evacuate, it is your responsibility to select and direct students to the best exit or exits for the situation. You must remain calmly and decisively in control of the students and the situation. Do everything you

can to keep your students calm. If they panic, they could easily be hurt.

There are four main factors to consider in deciding which exit(s) to use in an evacuation:

1. Distance of the exit from the immediate danger on board your bus (where is the fire or other danger located?)
2. Whether the path to the exit is clear
3. Whether the exit will still open (emergency doors can jam in a collision)
4. Potential hazards outside the bus (traffic, spilled fuel, broken glass or other debris, downed wire, elevation of the bus over a ditch or drop-off)

Consider directing students to more than one exit to get them out quicker in a severe emergency, but make sure each exit you choose is safe. Don't forget the passenger door. In many situations it might be the best exit for getting students out quickly and safely.

5.5.3 Safest way to go out emergency exits.

You must know how to open and use all emergency exits. Once you become a regular driver on a daily route, it will also be your responsibility to teach your students how to open and use emergency exits.

Students (and adults) can be hurt if they don't know how to go out exits correctly.

Emergency exits are a long way from the ground. Rear door exits are usually nearly four feet off the ground. Students must be taught to "sit and slide" out emergency doors. Jumping out exit doors is very dangerous.

If a side emergency window must be used in an evacuation, students (and adults) should exit "feet first, face down." To reduce the chance of an injury, pad the window sill with a jacket or fire blanket.

No matter which exit is utilized, select reliable, older students as "spotters" to stand outside the bus to assist students. This reduces the chance of an injury.

5.5.4 Accounting for students during an evacuation. Before students begin to evacuate, tell them exactly where to gather after they get off the bus. This is very important. Without clear guidance, students could wander off and be hurt, or worse.

Younger students should hold hands and "buddy up" as they exit the bus. Ask two reliable older students to go directly to the designated safe area and to gather younger students as they move away from the bus. Regardless of their age, demand that all students stay together in one safe area.

Immediately after the evacuation, make a student count. Compile an accurate student list. Compare it with your route sheet or trip roster to make sure all students are accounted for.

Contact base again by cell phone as soon as all students are off the bus. Update them about the situation so they can update emergency responders heading to the scene.

5.6 Unit 5 Review*Write down or circle the best answer(s)..***1. What are 3 ways you can protect the scene if you've had an accident?**

hazards / strobe
 4-ways
 reflectors

2. Identify 3 early warning signs of a possible mechanical problem on your bus.

guges
 noises
 smell

3. What should you say over the radio if you've had an accident?

clear radio
 bus #
 location
 type of accident
 # of injuries

4. TRUE or FALSE? "School buses cannot catch fire."**5. TRUE or FALSE?** "Always evacuate students in a school bus emergency."**6. What should you do if an electric wire comes in contact with your bus?**

Call phone - bus company
 Stay in bus

7. What's the safest way to go out a rear emergency door?

Sit + Slide

UNIT 5 NOTES & QUESTIONS

CORE UNIT 6: PJ'S LAW PRE-SERVICE

Unit 6 Topics

- 6.1 Backdrop of History and Law
- 6.2 P.J's Life
- 6.3 Sensitivity
- 6.4 Communication and Language
- 6.5 Embracing Difference
- 6.6 Unit Review

Introduction

In July of 2009 NY State enacted PJ's Law. PJ's Law addresses the need for sensitivity and awareness regarding the characteristics of a student's disability while riding on a school bus. This law requires that every newly hired school bus driver, attendant and monitor in NYS be trained prior to assuming the duties of a school bus driver. In addition, every existing school bus driver, attendant and monitor must receive annual training regarding the safe and sensitive transportation of students with disabilities.

This portion of your pre-service training will provide you with greater understanding of this law and the sensitivity needed to transport students safely and emotionally secure.

6.1 Backdrop of History

6.1.1 Who is PJ? PJ is a student with Autism from New York City. When he seemed to

become fearful of being on the bus, his mother placed a tape recorder in his backpack and found out that he was experiencing emotional abuse from the bus staff.

PJ is, in fact, a very difficult child to transport, although since the driver and attendant received little or no training in supporting PJ in his bus experience we don't know what could have been possible.

6.1.2 What the law requires. The wording of the law is interesting because it uses language that is more attitudinal than technical. It talks about understanding and attention, focusing on sensitivity in addition to technical skills. We often treat our training as technical – "How to secure a wheelchair" – than personal – "How do we interact with a wheelchair user?"

All newly hired school bus drivers will receive pre-service training prior to assuming their duties as a school bus driver, and existing school bus drivers will receive one hour of annual training related to the transportation of students with disabilities.

While the law refers to drivers who transport students with disabilities, the fact is that about 10% of the student population is identified as students with disabilities. However, 80% of those students ride the regular bus with their non-disabled peers. This means that all drivers are drivers of students with disabilities and will need to meet this mandate

If you do the math, 80% of 10% of the student population is 8% of the total student population. This means that every bus transporting 50 students has, on average, 4 students with a disability as passengers.

6.1.3 Legal Requirements. Laws governing transportation of students with disabilities include:

- **IDEA (Individual with Disabilities Education Act):** This law was first passed in 1974 and has been reauthorized and amended over the years since that time. IDEA guarantees a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to all students who have been identified as fitting into one of 13 disability categories established by the law. IDEA is committed to Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) which means children should be educated in the normal setting or as close to the normal setting as possible. For transportation this means transporting students with disabilities with their non-disabled peers as much as possible or LRTE (Least Restrictive Transportation Environment). IDEA recognizes that in addition to educational services, students with disabilities may also need additional services to access FAPE. One of the identified related services is transportation. Related Service providers, i.e. transportation personnel, are required to have training specific to the needs of the students that they serve.
- **FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act):** This law is designed to protect the privacy of educational records. Some school district employees have tried to say that this act prohibits access to IEP information for transportation staff. This interpretation is incorrect. The Act specifically allows the sharing of appropriate information with district or contracted staff to protect the safety of students.
- **ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act):** The ADA was enacted in 1990, and while school buses are specifically exempted from the criteria for accessible transportation, ADA established a broad understanding of rights for Persons with Disabilities that had not previously existed. Recent (2008) amendment to the ADA has made workplace discrimination rights clearer.
- **Part 200:** These are the New York State regulations that implement the requirements of the federal act, IDEA, in New York State. Part 200 also establishes the language we use to talk about special education processes in New York.
- **NYS Education Law 4402(7):** This law specifically requires this sharing of appropriate information with transportation personnel – see next slide.
- **156.3** The reason that 156.3 is listed is because training for transportation of children with disabilities is specifically mentioned in regards to both Pre-service and Basic training for drivers, attendants and monitors.
- **NYSED (New York State Education Department) – VESID (Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities):** The

implementation of Education Law 4402(7) that requires bus staff to know about the children they transport.

The same text, with the excerpted section is as follows:

“Transportation personnel with responsibility to provide a program, service, accommodation, modification or support must be directly informed of their specific responsibilities to implement a student’s IEP. In addition to the IEP recommendations, transportation personnel should be informed of any special information regarding the student that might impact on the health and safety of the student during transportation, including but not limited to:

- the reasons a student requires special transportation;
- health needs that might necessitate ongoing or emergency intervention;
- student behavioral issues or fears that might raise health or safety concerns; and
- specialized training required for bus drivers and/or attendants.”*

*Rebecca H. Cort, Deputy Commissioner, VESID, Letter to Superintendents, March 2005

6.1.4 Parent and Student Rights. Parents and students are entitled to some specific rights regarding school transportation:

- Safe, current, working equipment and vehicles
- Appropriate staffing on vehicle

- Consistent staff assignments
- Staff knowing student-specific needs
- Staff receiving student-specific training
- Student-specific emergency plans
- Respectful, friendly bus environment

6.1.5 Driver, Attendant and Monitor Rights. Bus staff also have rights, which are very similar to those of parents and students.

- Safe, current, working equipment and vehicles
- Appropriate staffing on vehicle
- Consistent staff assignments
- Staff knowing student-specific needs
- Staff receiving student-specific training
- Student-specific emergency plans
- Respectful, friendly bus environment

6.2 PJ's Life

6.2.1 Isolation. Isolation is not just a way of life for students with disabilities, but also for their whole family. Other families stop visiting and don't want their children to play with a child with a disability, as if it's contagious. Strangers often walk up and offer unsolicited advice without knowing the situation and parents are seen as selfish for wanting their child to develop to his or her fullest potential.

- Stigma
- Isolation
- Unknowledgeable advice
- Perception of selfishness
- Conflicting agency rules
- Inter-disability tensions
- Constantly changing service providers
- Available versus needed services

- Tension between LRE and special services

Just as different racial or ethnic groups can be at odds with each other, different disability groups can be in conflict as well. Funding decisions between a sheltered workshop or a community mental health center or between full funding for speech and language therapist or a physical therapist might lead one group to think that the other is getting the lion's share of the resources.

Families must juggle services from multiple agencies which often have conflicting funding and service guidelines. Service providers are constantly changing so desperately needed consistency is only a dream. Qualifying for services requires parents to paint a dismal picture of their child. They are torn between not wanting the stigmatizing label and needing the services that demand that their child be labeled.

As transporters, we can choose to be understanding of these challenges or we can choose to be rigid and demanding of parents and students. Let's commit to being one service they receive for their child that warms their hearts instead of knotting their stomachs.

6.2.2 Teaming with Parents. Some drivers or attendants might ask, "Why are we talking about parents?" We can't talk about children without understanding them within the context of their home and school life. In order to get to know the students we transport who need our special attention, we need to understand their family and school settings.

Parents, especially those with transportation challenges for visiting school, often feel isolated from the school program. School

bus staff can serve to bridge the home and school divide by passing information back and forth in a timely and accurate way.

- Recognize family as an information source
- Be an active listener
- Give accurate info about transportation
- Help parents understand system
- Let them know you care about their child

"FAMILY STORY"

Lucas was diagnosed with autism when he was almost three years old. The 'experts' told us that Lucas would probably never speak or be able to understand any communication, because the combination of autism and extreme hyperactivity would probably not allow him to be taught.

We were told to be prepared to consider institutionalizing Lucas, possibly as young as ten years old. Now, about 16 years later, Lucas communicates, mostly with language (he still needs visual cues to keep himself straight, but does pretty well with words as the visual cues, now that he's begun to read.) He's still hyperactive, but medication has allowed his hyperactivity to be brought under control, so that he could learn (and sleep!)

We don't let Lucas ride the school bus, because we had too many problems with the driver. She kept dropping him off and leaving before he got inside, for one thing. That could have been a nightmare if no one was home, obviously.

The really scary part was that when we finally had enough of her and tried to talk to our school district about it (the school

teachers had serious concerns about her, too) we were told that there was nothing they could do, and the district supported the driver!"* *http://world-of-autism.com

40
Feelings are not a function
of IQ but of
humanity.

6.3 Sensitivity

6.3.1 What's it Like? What's it like for the students? "Everyone knew what a short bus was for. When I got off that short bus with those wheelchair kids, everyone knew I was a retard. I came to hate that stupid, ugly, dopey short bus. I guess I hated it so much because those of us who went to school on it were teased by the other kids. We were the 'short bus kids,' which was like calling us 'retards,' only even more unkind, it seemed to me for some reason." (William Helmuth, 1995)

Activity: List 5 things that happen on the bus or at school that make students with disabilities feel like outsiders.

1. Isolating / not talking to them
2. bullying / calling names
3. Making fun of them
4. laughing at them
5. _____

Have you ever thought about?

- How students with disabilities felt about their isolation and rejection from the outside world?
- How non-verbal children exhibit a sense of humor, embarrassment, anger, or glee even though someone had defined the child as "non-communicative"?

6.3.2 Wikipedia – "Short Buses".

"'Short buses' can be used by smaller school districts on routes with few students to pick up. However, a more prominent use is to transport small numbers of children to and from vocational school, those in a special education class within a mainstream school, or schools for children who are mentally retarded."

This Wikipedia passage demonstrates the pervasiveness of the link between the short bus and students with disabilities. Riding the short bus is hard on anyone. When school districts have routed the neighborhood peers of a child with a disability on a "short" bus for purposes of inclusion, parents have complained because they don't want their children to be stigmatized by riding the bus that is linked to students with disabilities.

What appears at first to be a neutral term – "short" – in reference to physical dimension takes on additional overtones because of the stigma of the people associated with it just as black takes on negative overtones as in the black sheep, black humor, or Black Monday – the stock market crash of 1987. The neutral definition of the word takes on a deeper meaning because of the negative attitudes towards those associated with the word.

6.3.3 We Assume and so Create. By denying students with disabilities access to education and communication opportunities we create a self-fulfilling prophecy. They do not learn because we don't teach them in a way that works for them. We then assume they didn't learn because they can't learn instead of because we did not teach them.

The number of personal life histories of children with disabilities whose parents were told to institutionalize them as infants or toddlers who turned out to, in fact, be intelligent, college graduates, and professionals is far too long to list.

6.4 Communication and Language

6.4.1 Different Ways to Communicate.

What it has taken us so long to figure out is that there are many students with disabilities who cannot communicate with standard speech but who can communicate through many other strategies. We need to learn how they communicate in order to welcome them onto our buses and to explain safe bus riding procedures.

- Speech (in all its variations)
- Sign language
- Gestures/Behaviors
- Touch screens
- Storyboards
- Typing machines
- Facilitated communication

Touch screens and storyboards allow students to communicate by making choices and grouping words or images together into a complete idea.

There are many different types of typing machines, some with traditional keyboards, others with other systems to give voice to thoughts, ideas and opinions.

Facilitated Communication is a system where an assistant provides support for the student as they type. Some students continue to need facilitation, others learn to type on their own. This system could not be used on the bus unless the facilitator traveled with the student.

What has been interesting is that some non-verbal students who began to use some of

these strategies to communicate begin to talk after they have become successful non-verbal communicators.

6.4.1a Effective Communication is:

- Establishing positive relationships
- Talking their language at their level
- Respecting their space
- Build on their abilities
- Offering choice
- Teach one thing at a time
- Modeling
- Practicing
- Repetition, repetition, repetition, repetition

Unfortunately we sometimes forget that different students and adults as well, learn very differently. Our safety goal is to have everybody learn. This means we need a few different ways to transmit the important safety (physical and emotional) information.

6.4.1b Life is Not Easy

*"Life is not easy for any of us. But what of that? We must have perseverance and, above all, confidence in ourselves. We must believe that we are gifted for something, and that this something, at whatever cost, must be attained." **

**Marie Curie*

6.4.2 Language of Respect.

- Do not focus on impairments/conditions/equipment unless it is crucial to the discussion. Try not to tell tear-jerking stories about students with disabilities. If we can speak directly about them as real people with specific abilities and needs we are much more likely to get their needs met. It is far better to focus on the issues or barriers which affect the quality of life of disabled people than to focus on how "unfortunate" they are. Don't refer to

students by their diagnoses or their equipment. You don't go to a school to pick up "three wheelchairs" or "Autistics" – you are picking up students.

- Do not sensationalize or make assumptions about a disability by using phrases like 'afflicted with,' 'suffers from,' 'victim of,' 'crippled with' and so on.
- Use phrases such as 'student who has arthritis' or 'child who has cystic fibrosis' instead.
- Why do we say a person who uses a wheelchair is confined to it? When we go on vacation are we confined to our car or are we glad to have a car so we don't have to walk to Florida?
- Do not use emotional descriptions such as "unfortunate," "pitiful," "mad," "psycho," "stupid," "mental," or "handicapped."
- Do not use generic labels for groups of disabled people, such as 'the deaf,' 'the blind' or 'the disabled.' While they may share a disability, they are not a homogenous group in terms of interests, lifestyle, employment, or hobbies any more than any other random collection of persons.
- Try to focus on the individual and not on their particular impairment or condition. Use person-first language. Say things like 'child who is deaf' rather than a 'deaf child' or 'student diagnosed with epilepsy' rather than 'epileptic student'.
- Do not use euphemisms to describe persons with disabilities. Phrases such as 'physically challenged' or 'differently able' are considered to be condescending by persons with disabilities.

6.5 Embracing Difference

6.5.1 Disability as Difference not Deviance. When we talk about students with disabilities we need to be intentional about how we

understand and speak about them. We are all different in many ways. "Different" is not intrinsically unacceptable, while "deviant" turns difference into a negative quality.

This differentiation between Difference and deviance is key to seeing students or persons with disabilities as simply a part of the diversity of the world. Different is value neutral, like hair color or height. If we can understand differences in communication style, physical development, and mental processing as different with the same neutrality then our students can take their place as equally valued members of schools and society.

Being different does not mean that you have to be fixed because something is missing or broken.

Deviance is a loaded term that includes overtones of immorality and "not like me in a bad way." At the turn of the 19th century, this was how persons with disabilities were outwardly viewed and described – as having flawed morals and character. Deviance then begs to be fixed, while persons with disabilities simply want to become themselves, not some other "normal" model of human correctness.

- Different is "The quality or condition of being unlike or dissimilar."
- Round/Square Lift-equipped/not lift-equipped
- Value neutral – one not better than the other
- Deviant is "One that differs from a norm, especially a person whose behavior and attitudes differ from accepted standards."
- Moral/immoral Like me/not like me Normal bus/Handicapped bus
- Value judgment -- not as good as

6.5.2 Embracing Difference. The goal is that our bus staff will understand that everyone has needs. For instance, someone who needs extra or special light in the classroom or

fancy projection equipment, people who do not bring a wheelchair with them expect that everywhere they go a chair, will be provided. Nondisabled runners need a different start time from the faster wheelchair racers. This list can go on and on.

Having the opportunities for choice, add to students' self-esteem and confidence.

What is really disabling for students with disabilities is when our attitudes or our equipment prevent them from accessing an education because we don't believe they can do it.

We need to learn to change the bus to meet the students' abilities and communication style, not reject them because they can't ride like "everyone" else.

We need to abandon our stigmatization of students with disabilities and their families and welcome them into the broad diversity of our society.

- Everyone has needs
- Everyone can choose
- Societal attitudes are disabling
- No lift is a handicap – wheelchair use is not
- Bus changes to accommodate student
- Stigma abandoned

6.6 Unit 6 Review

Circle the most appropriate answer:

1. PJ's Law focuses on _____ in addition to technical skills.

- a. Background checks
- b. Seniority
- ☒ c. Sensitivity
- d. Crisis intervention

2. Which of the following is an appropriate way to communicate with a student with a disability?

- a. Storyboards
- b. Sign language
- c. Touch screens
- ☒ d. All of the above

3. When communicating with a student with a disability is recommended to:

- a. Joke about it to lighten the mood
- b. Focus on the disability and talk about it openly and often
- ☒ c. Use language of respect
- d. All of the above

4. Disability is a difference and not a deviance.

- ☒ a. True
- b. False
- c. It depends
- d. None of the above

5. Person – first language focuses on:

- ☒ a. Always allowing a person with a disability to go ahead of you
- b. Speaking of the person first and the disability second
- c. Using the exact name of the disability out of respect
- ☒ d. All of the above

6. PJ's Law requires school bus staff to:

- a. Be trained annually regarding sensitivity toward the characteristics of student's disabilities
- b. Embrace differences in the students they transport
- c. Welcome students with disabilities into the broad diversity of students they transport
- ☒ d. All of the above

UNIT 6 NOTES AND QUESTIONS:

- 1 field
- 2 cat
- 3 fun
- 4 ~~keep~~ heap
- 5 wide
- 6 bed
- 7 six
- 8 to ~~ten~~ send
- 9 bed
- 10 quick